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CITY of LOS ANGELES

BEFORE

THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Committee and provide information on emergency management in the City of Los Angeles. I have been an emergency management professional for nearly 30 years, and have served as the General Manager of the Emergency Preparedness Department for the City of Los Angeles since 1997. Prior to joining the City of Los Angeles, I was the Director of the Atlanta-Fulton County Emergency Management Agency for ten years.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, our concern about the preparations and response at multiple levels should be viewed as an opportunity to focus on the need -- and the steps required -- to build strong and integrated preparedness and response systems. National emergency management standards that were developed by local and state emergency management practitioners are being used and applied every day throughout the nation. As part of the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, or EMAP, these standards provide a framework for evaluating and strengthening a local or state government's preparedness, from identifying hazards, vulnerable populations, and critical infrastructures, to planning, communications, training, exercises, and public education and information. EMAP's process of emergency management standards for local and state governments and verified assessment of such should be built upon and used to elevate our expectations of local and state government preparedness.

Our executives and the public are asking us, emergency management professionals, "Are we prepared?" To that end, the City of Los Angeles will be conducting an assessment of our capability thorough the EMAP process that will allow us to develop a clear roadmap for enhancing our current emergency management plan.

The City of Los Angeles as a candidate for national accreditation is seeking to have a nationally recognized emergency management program that:

- Meets national standards with a mechanism for objective evaluation;

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City of Los Angeles

- Enhances public support for emergency management programs by demonstrating accountability;
- Serves as a credible source for information on emergency management practices; and,
- Promotes voluntary and continuous self-improvement of all emergency management programs and functions, both internally and with its partners.

The Emergency Preparedness Department (EPD) created in 1999, is an ordinance department reporting directly to the Mayor and is tasked with leading the City of Los Angeles to prepare for respond to, and recover from disasters, as well as coordinating all city emergency preparedness activities including community education and outreach.

EPD relies on its broad legislative authorities and strong partnerships with federal, state, and other local governments; voluntary organizations; business and industry; and individuals to accomplish its mission. Through these partnerships, the department leads the City to plan and prepare for the risks that face the City—whether natural or man-made—including floods, fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, and terrorist attacks. When disaster strikes, and the local capacity to respond is overwhelmed, and the President declares a disaster, FEMA coordinates with state and local government, for response, recovery, and mitigation efforts.

As EPD moves into the new century, it continues to work to bring the City to a greater level of preparedness, and continues to serve as the primary portal for emergency management information and expertise.

THEMES OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM

While EPD will need to rely on its strengths to carry out its mission, several important themes exert a consistent influence on the way it has set its goals and developed its strategies for achieving them.

Leadership, Coordination and Management

EPD is first and foremost a coordinating agency. EPD achieves its goals primarily through leading, coordinating, and managing integration of local agencies' efforts, as well as those of voluntary organizations, states, and neighborhoods. This means that while EPD can have a great influence, it often does not and cannot exert direct control over the outcomes it seeks. This is precisely why EPD has adopted partnering as a core strategy.

Terrorism and Preparedness

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon brought new focus on the need to strengthen preparedness and catastrophic disaster planning. As the local organization tasked with leading the City's efforts to prepare for and respond to the consequences of terror attacks, including the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction on American soil, our role in homeland security is now more critical than ever. EPD is committed to working with its partners at all levels and applying the experience and expertise it has gained through managing disasters of all types to ensure that the City is prepared to manage the consequences of terrorism.

State and Local Capability

In conjunction with the new level of effort being directed to preparedness, EPD is committed to working closely with the Federal Government, State of California, Los Angeles County and other local communities, where response to disasters begins, to integrate the emergency manager and first-responder communities. We will also work to ensure integrated and seamless management of every type and magnitude of disaster. With its partners, EPD will assess, and as necessary, build and augment the planning, preparedness, and response capabilities so we can better mitigate the effects of and recovery from disasters.

Shared Responsibility

If the City is to make significant progress toward achieving EPD's vision—*To ensure that the City of Los Angeles has the best Emergency Management Program... Anywhere!*—individuals, business and industry, and government organizations at all levels must share the responsibility. We must all be aware of the risks we face, and make intelligent decisions to deal with those risks both before and after disasters strike. Individually and collectively, we are each responsible for making good decisions, whether we are preparing our homes to better survive a hurricane, fire, flood or earthquake, or are deciding how to repair and rebuild after disaster strikes. As the September 11 attacks showed, business and industry—the lifeblood of the

City's economy—also bear a great responsibility for evaluating potential risks and developing contingency and disaster plans of their own. Government, and EPD in particular, will continue to bear much of the responsibility for providing information on hazards and their risks, but we are all responsible for using that information to prepare for and respond to disasters.

CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION

A number of important challenges confront EPD as it sets about working to achieve its goals, objectives, and strategies.

Workforce Management and Limited Resources

EPD, like most City departments, faces serious challenges in maintaining and growing its workforce. EPD has therefore committed itself to retaining, recruiting, and training a top-notch workforce, and developing a staff with the talent, skills, and dedication necessary to meet the demands of the future. EPD also faces a second problem familiar to all City Departments—limited resources.

Increased Risk

America's metropolitan areas continue to grow in size and density, with many of the largest situated in coastal regions, along earthquake faults, or in other high-risk areas. Commercial and residential developments have meanwhile progressed at a rapid pace across the Nation, expanding into previously unsettled or sparsely settled areas. This exposes growing communities to new risks, especially wildfire, flooding and erosion. To address these growing risks, EPD will continue to emphasize pre-disaster mitigation and insurance. The risks associated with acts of terrorism also pose a significant challenge for EPD. Although EPD has worked for many years in the preparedness arena, we have all gained a new understanding of what is possible. The Nation is looking to the emergency management community to face this challenge.

Change Management

To meet the challenges it faces, EPD must be ready to change—not once, but continuously. This will require a new approach, a new understanding, and a new way of doing business for the agency and those who help carry out its mission. Change must be embraced as a way of life at every level of the agency. This may be the most difficult challenge the agency faces. Since 1999, EPD has handled its mission with much success and as a result, enjoys high public confidence. Resisting the temptation to rest on the agency's past successes is where the greatest challenge may lie. This is no time for overconfidence.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to address this Committee. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.